

The best way to get your most basic questions answered about the municipal building proposal is to start with the Town Hall on June 23, 2020 and then review the information on the borough website (found under Facilities Committee), including these Frequently Asked Questions. During the Town Hall, you will see the Mayor, Chair of the Facilities Committee, Council President, the Borough Administrator and project architect discuss the proposal and why we are where we are today. They also take numerous questions from the over 100 households who dialed in live.

View Presentation: <https://www.leonianj.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=1604>

Some frequently asked questions...

Why do we need a new municipal building?

First a little history... Leonia has been operating our Police Department from the same HQ since 1931. Leonia's Court was previously housed at the Borough Annex (the current Senior Center from the 1980's through last year. Our Borough Hall is at 312 Broad Avenue in the old Telephone Exchange Building since the 1940's.

No one should say the Borough of Leonia has not gotten its money's worth out of every one of our municipal buildings. And as your Mayor and Council (M&C) move forward the watchword and our driving force will continue to be value for the money. With 93% of Leonia's tax base coming from residential property owners, this is a necessity and something your volunteer elected officials (who are also taxpayers) never forget.

Please understand not one of these buildings (Police HQ, the old Court, and the current Borough Hall) were built for the purpose we used them. They are all repurposed; made workable through an additional (and ongoing investment) to keep them viable. This by itself, creates inefficiencies. Up until several years ago we could continue to invest a modest amount of money to keep them going for what we needed. No longer can their continued viability be guaranteed with just a modest amount of money. Nor is the footprint and space available going to meet state and county statutory standards.

We are at the point where it no longer makes sense to invest additional money to keep these buildings operational because their inefficiencies of function and facility are now untenable. Leonia has been considering a new municipal building for over 10 years, hoping against hope that somehow we could just continue to get by. We can't continue to kick the can down the road any longer without significant legal risk. We are obligated to take action. Addressing these issues isn't optional anymore, it is a necessity.

Why... Because NJ state authorities and the Bergen County Sheriff have informed the Borough that we are NOT in compliance with existing state and county statutes governing both our Police Department HQ and Court. There are over 100 safety and security violations outstanding. Both

facilities are inadequate for today's requirements in many ways including but not limited to officer security, evidence storage, interview rooms, training rooms, prisoner handling and space requirements for cells, a mandated prisoner garage/sally port, and, with a police force which prides ourselves on the diversity of our officers, we lack separate female officer locker and bathroom space in HQ. Leonia is proud of the diversity of the Leonia Police Department. Yet today, we provide female officers with a locker room which is really a closet and to get there they must walk through the men's locker room. This is ridiculous and untenable. There is simply not the space in the current building to accommodate all the new requirements. Similarly, when the Court was at the Annex, LPD officers were unable to perform adequate screening because the Annex footprint was inadequate and therefore created a serious security risk to Court personnel, police officers and attendees.

Who has been driving the effort for a new Municipal Building?

Three years ago, Mayor Zeigler appointed a Facilities Committee to get serious about moving forward on an issue which had been dragging for many years and previous M&C's. This Facilities Committee, comprised of Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilman Bill Ziegler as Chair, and Council President Pasquale Fusco, has been meeting monthly ever since. Before he resigned, Councilman Greg Makroulakis also served. Many of these meetings, when not involving legal matters and contract negotiations, were open to the public. Information and updates were regularly posted on the Borough website. If you haven't already read this information, please avail yourself of it.

What is the new building going to be used for?

We intend to move Police HQ, the Leonia Court and all administrative departments/functions to a new three floor building. The bottom floor is for the police station, the top floor is the Court and the middle floor will be all borough administration and departments including the Borough Administrator, the Finance/Tax office, the Health Department, and the Borough Clerk.

Why don't we continue to use the old municipal building for the administrative functions?

Our current Borough Hall at 312 Broad Avenue is indeed a beautiful and, many would say, iconic structure. That doesn't mean it is a good fit for our needs. It isn't. As a repurposed building it isn't configured in the most efficient way to facilitate the necessary transactions and interactions with Leonians. Storage is woefully inadequate, the one conference room doubles as a pantry, the basement needs major repairs, plumbing and electrical systems are similarly challenged. The current cost of repairs to allow us to continue to use the building would be a approximately \$500 K. And this is on top of another infusion of \$250,000 ten years ago. It is a very expensive building to operate and is suboptimal in satisfying the needs of the community.

Despite these shortcomings, the Facilities Committee carefully considered keeping the administrative functions at 312 Broad Avenue and not moving these to a new floor in a new building.

We engaged a Fortune 100 senior corporate financial services expert who agreed to donate his time with the task of evaluating the cost effectiveness of moving the current Borough Hall staff and functions to the new building. He compared the project costs of a new floor construction to renovating/maintaining the old building. Anticipating a 40-50 year lifespan for the new building, he determined that Leonia would break even on costs for the administrative floor within 20 years. He also determined that renovating/maintaining the old building for 50+ years (through 2070) would be cost prohibitive and a much larger cost burden for Leonia in the long run. For a detailed view of this comprehensive and unedited cost analysis, please consult the information posted on the Borough website under the title "Facilities Committee".

What will happen to the current police station building?

As the current Police building is also Fire HQ (at the northern end facing Borough Place) and the Fire Department desperately needs additional space to improve the safety of its volunteers, we will be using the majority of the vacated police space for the fire department's use. This will allow the Fire Department to ease some of the current congestion in the firehouse. For example, firefighter gear is stored along the side bay walls with very little room to maneuver between the lockers and the departing trucks. This has been an untenable situation for quite awhile and it is a safety hazard that needs to be addressed. By utilizing additional adjacent space formerly occupied by the police HQ and making some needed renovations, we intend to open up this area, working closely with our volunteers and soliciting their input on how best to accomplish. It is essential we address this congestion and decrease any risks of firefighters getting hurt.

It is also the intent of the M&C to use the southern most part of the current police building to build a community meeting room which would be available both for fire department training classes and also Boards, Commissions, and community organizations who sign up to use the space. We recognize meeting space in Leonia has always been at a premium, and we believe this will help the community considerably. We excel as a community largely due to the time and effort put forth by our volunteers across all the different organizations, Boards, Commissions etc. they serve and represent. This will provide another place for our town volunteers to meet and help get their work done on behalf of Leonia.

What locations did you consider before settling on the current plan to build adjacent to Wood Park?

We considered a wide variety of locations for a new building. We did not engage in a one dimensional decision calculus and considered many variables to settle on the most balanced

and appropriate proposal to move forward. Some of the criteria we focussed on, as it related specifically to location, included a central location (to enable quick police response to all parts of the borough), central accessibility by our residents to encourage shopping in the business district while visiting Borough Hall, and proximity to other public lands, and cost considerations.

Here is a partial-- not exhaustive-- list of sites we considered:

Elm Street Parking Lot, the current location of the new Senior Center (previously the Borough Annex) and the adjacent Sculpture Garden, the Recreation Building, Dudley Allen Park and adjacent town property at the north end of town, Willow Tree Road, Station Parkway, and the southwest corner of Leonia.

A central location also helps Leonians continue their easy access of the finance office, the health department, Borough Clerk or Borough Administrator whenever they require (making walking there a potentially easier alternative to consider from any point in town).

As in the past, Borough Hall serves as a magnet for the business district and this helps by placing more Leonians in proximity to the diversity of merchants and service offerings currently available in our central business district, further enhancing the viability and vitality of our small businesses.

Why are we confident this is the right location for the new municipal building?

The new municipal building will house the Police, Court and Administrative offices for the Borough. A central Leonia location (which, of course, Wood Park represents) will facilitate the same quick response by the Police to an emergency anywhere in the Borough. Police Chief Rowe confirms a central location as being very important to a quick and consistently fast emergency response. Time saves lives. We are going to do everything possible to also ensure the Englewood Hospital Ambulance service continues to stage from Leonia and this central location will facilitate that as well. Leonians enjoy an ambulance service response which includes EMS and Advanced Life Support services from the old Ambulance Corps Building in Wood Park today. There is no doubt that medical emergencies requiring ALS need to be on the scene quickly. Minutes and seconds matter. A central location makes all the difference and Leonia is very fortunate to have Englewood Hospital staging their area response covering multiple towns from our town center.

The property we are going to build the new building on has been designated in the Master Plan to be acquired for public use for the past 50 years. The footprint is ideal for the modular construction building which we have in mind. Other locations did not offer the same centrality of location or the desired footprint. Being adjacent to public land (Wood Park and the Library) makes for a seamless public area that Leonians will be drawn to for a variety of reasons. It is a

win for walkability, a win for emergency response (both Police and Ambulance) and a win for the town's merchants.

Isn't it possible to simply build a new story or two on the old police station and firehouse?

No, this isn't possible or practical. The basic footprint of the building is inadequate in two respects. First, it cannot accommodate a sally port for prisoner processing as required by State statute. Second, the inefficiencies of the old building for continued 24/7 use makes the improvements necessary cost prohibitive relative to a new building constructed for the purpose we need.

What happens to the beautiful and iconic Broad Avenue building if it is no longer going to be used as a Borough Hall? It won't be torn down will it?

The M&C are committed along with Leonia's Historic Preservation Commission to protecting this historic building. What does that mean? The M&C have indicated their strong support for all preservation moves recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission to protect the building facade from demolition. The outside front of the building will not be able to change. If there is a private owner, they have the option of changing the interior substantially to suit their requirements. We are also in the very early stages of exploring the sale of the building to another public entity which would not likely make as many significant changes to the structure. In any case, the facade, which everyone appreciates is the defining attribute of this wonderful and iconic structure would be protected.

How can Leonia afford a \$10 million price tag right now?

Frankly, we don't have much choice when it comes to moving forward with a new building. Please take some comfort in the fact Leonia has a strong track record of getting our money's worth out of our facilities. This investment will be no different. There are several ways we intend to make sure we've again put ourselves on the path to getting the best value for money.

We've determined that modular as opposed to standard construction is our best bet. Again, the watchword is value for money. Modular construction will likely save the taxpayer's approximately \$75 a square foot with no difference in quality from standard on site construction, an accelerated timetable to completion and a 50+ year useful life. We've conservatively estimated the full costs at \$10 million with modular construction and without factoring in any revenues received from the sale or lease or new ratables created by the old Borough Hall (again, this is in order to present a very conservative cost picture). We are taking full advantage of depressed demand for new construction in today's economy to help Leonia get the most favorable contractor costs. Modular construction labor costs will not be the prevailing wage paid here in Metro NY (typically expensive) and will reflect the lower prevailing wage wherever the winning modular construction bidder is located. There is a complete breakdown of

the conservative cost estimates associated with the new building on the website and included in the June 23 Town Hall presentation.

What is different about a modular building vs. standard construction and why does it save so much \$?

Modular construction is basically a pre-cast building. The building pieces are made in a factory somewhere else and transported for assembly to the site. Labor costs are based on the fabrication facility location which will most likely be outside of the NY/NJ metropolitan area and represent a significant savings by itself. Modular is far cheaper than on site construction from the bottom up, even with the transportation costs of the building segments to Leonia included. Yet, we know modular construction does not compromise quality in any way, accelerates the timeline to building completion/occupation and will cost approximately \$75 a square foot less.